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men every day. Here is a telegram of forty words to which a reply should be sent in ten. Here is a letter of a thousand words which should be answered in fifty. Every professional man is examined severely, every day of his life. He is forced to bring to the examination every idea, and all the skill, that he has. The surgeon is suddenly called upon to perform the operation for appendicitis; some men, indeed, twenty a week, and no two alike. In each operation every bit of his knowledge of the anatomy of those parts may be brought into play, and he works under stress of excitement and responsibility. The test is very much the same in kind as the sudden examination of a pupil at school, but fiercer. So with the lawyer; every case in court involves a cram and an examination. The trouble with school examinations is that it is difficult to offer children appropriate tests of their power. This is the point at which we have failed.

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The next item of business is the report of the committee to confer with the Commission of Colleges in New England on Admission Examinations. This report relates to admission to college by certificate and by examination. It will be presented by the chairman, Mr. Ramsay, of Fall River.

MR. CHARLES CORNELL RAMSAY, Principal of the B. M. C. Durfee High School, Fall River: Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen—I take pleasure in submitting to you at this time, as chairman of your Committee of Conference with the New England College Commission, our

REPORT ON ADMISSION TO COLLEGE ON CERTIFICATE AND BY EXAMINATION

Before your committee was assigned the duty of investigating and reporting on the two methods of admission to college now in use, it was doubtless believed that a difference of opinion on the subject existed among school and college teachers; and the results of our work, which later in this report I have summarized, clearly justify such a belief. The question is, therefore, a *debatable* one.

Allow me to call your attention, at the threshold of the subject, to

I. SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In the serious consideration of any important question, it is desirable—indeed, it is necessary—to find a fundamental basis upon which the discussion

may rest, and from which it may proceed. This is true, not only that the structure of argument may have a foundation, not only — moreover — because the problem can by such a method be more easily solved; but also, since — in matters fundamental and essential — men are pretty generally agreed. Those who dissent from one another often start from the same premises or assumptions, but reach different conclusions because they draw different inferences from the facts.

In the present instance, as in so many others, we must seek in the field of ideals the basis we need; and here let me remark upon the harmony or the similarity — not to say the identity — of the ideals of all persons of the same class. Particularly is this true of the ideals of educated men. As educators, our ideals or highest aims are very much alike; we differ chiefly in the means by which to attain them.

The principal ideal of every wise, worthy, and progressive headmaster is freedom — freedom to do or to attempt to do the best things in what he conceives to be the best ways. Such a headmaster regards the education of his pupils as his great aim and his chief responsibility; but he sees it broadly, as a many-sided, all-inclusive process. He feels that, intellectually, education is the growth and development of mental power through self-activity in a stimulating and soliciting environment. He knows that no exercise, no effort, no performance, has genuine or permanent educative value that is not accompanied by, or founded upon, interest. Freedom, spontaneity, interest — these are the characteristic or dominant notes in his ideal, intellectually, for his pupils and his school. He desires the priceless opportunity to enkindle in the minds of his pupils an insatiable thirst for knowledge, a fervent love of learning, a permanent and profound attachment to the intellectual life, which, as Philip Gilbert Hamerton truly says, consists not so much in extent of knowledge as in the constant preference of higher thoughts over lower thoughts. In contemplation of this aspect of his important work, the headmaster remembers the eloquent and forcible words of Plato, in which he describes the man of culture and of philosophic character:

A lover, not of a part of wisdom, but of the whole; who has a taste for every sort of knowledge, and is curious to learn, and is never satisfied; who has magnificence of mind, and is the spectator of all time and all existence; who is harmoniously constituted; of a well-proportioned and gracious mind, whose own nature will move spontaneously towards the true being of everything; who has a good memory and is quick to learn, noble, gracious, the friend of truth, justice, courage, and temperance (*Republic*, pp. 475-487, Jowett's translation).

Ethically, he regards his work as of supreme importance. At every step he feels that he must develop the idea of the right, and stimulate the undying love of righteousness in the minds and hearts of his pupils. He deeply feels his obligation to develop and strengthen in them a fine sense of honor, purity, self-respect, and unselfish regard for the rights and feelings of others. He would found truth upon the love of truth, and establish the intellect upon the

heart; and so labor that day by day "more and more shall respect to reverence grow."

Nor will he neglect the important culture in his pupils of the sense of beauty in nature, art, and human life and conduct. Under his influence and guidance they will grow into a nice appreciation of the excellence and service to man of all the nobler arts of expression, and come to hate the tawdry, vulgar, and commonplace. They will be led to see that true beauty is not only the garment, but also of the very substance of truth; and they will be led to feel, moreover, that beauty and goodness are so absolutely one that the acme of esthetic taste and attainment is "the beauty of holiness.

From his acquaintance with the facts and principles of sociology, economics, and political science, the worthy headmaster conceives his just functions in terms much broader than mere pedagogic performance. He recognizes, as expressed by Commissioner W. T. Harris, in the report of the Committee of Fifteen, that

The requirement of the civilization into which the child is born, as determining, not only what he shall study in school, but what habits and customs he shall be taught in the family before the school age arrives; as well as that he shall acquire a skilled acquaintance with some one of a definite series of trades, professions, or vocations in the years that follow school; and, furthermore, that this question of the relation of the pupil to his civilization determines what political duties he shall assume and what religious faith or spiritual aspirations he shall adopt for the conduct of his life.

He will, therefore, desire not only the freedom, but also the stimulation from all influences affecting his administration, so to arrange the program of studies in his school that every pupil shall be prepared to fill the niche in life for which he by nature was designed. He would so wisely teach that his pupils' aptitudes shall be strongly developed to the end that they shall not only not make shipwreck of their lives, but rather shall do their full share of the world's great work.

But the worthy headmaster — although he is specially charged with the responsibility, from which he cannot escape, of looking out for the welfare of the secondary school — is also deeply interested in what precedes and what follows this period. He appreciates the solidarity of education; he is concerned about the final product, the ultimate success, of the whole educational course. His aim is the highest service of society; and hence he is anxious to place in the hands of the college instructor the best material for the work of the latter. He desires to prevent all possible waste in education, which — after all — is but a waste of human life, and therefore he wishes to send up to the college and the university men who are thoroughly prepared to profit by the splendid opportunities that will there be offered them.

Having thus briefly surveyed the field of our ideals, and expressed in inadequate terms what is to us trite and familiar, it is perhaps scarcely necessary for me to say that — to test the worth or worthlessness of every part of our present school machinery and of every proposed alteration or addition to

the same—we must first subject it to measurement by our ideal standards. Whatever bears such a test—that is, whatever will help us to approximate the realization of our ideal aims—we regard as good, and we think worthy of our approval and adoption.

Does admission to college on certificate from the secondary school bear this test? Does admission to college by examination by the college authorities bear this test? Do both, or neither, bear it? Such are the important questions we are set to consider at this hour.

In endeavoring to answer these questions the wise headmaster remembers that he is bringing into conjunction the real and the ideal, the inner world of reality and the outer world of practical life. At once he recognizes in the latter the imperfection of human nature, and the defects of the best-laid plans—plans whose purpose may be, like the tower of Babel, to reach even to heaven itself. He soon comes upon the realm of expediency, wherein he often discovers that even some evils, or inadequate or unsatisfactory means, are necessary until greater wisdom shall reveal a better way; and that of several evils he must choose the least.

Such may be the truth regarding admission to college, both on certificate and by examination. Not all headmasters are wise, worthy, and progressive; and, even in case of those who are, their assistants are not always so; or, when both are, the school authorities or patrons of the school are sometimes selfish and exert a powerful influence to compass undesirable or unworthy ends. Parenthetically, let me here say that a headmaster may consistently follow the rule to certify for college only those of his pupils who have attained a rank above a certain point in his scale of marks; and thus, treating all alike, seek to do justice to each, while trying to send properly prepared candidates to college. My own rules are as follows: (1) The candidate must have taken the work prescribed for admission to the college of his choice; (2) he must have done in my own school, during term time, the work for which he seeks my certificate; and (3) he must have attained in such work a grade of A or B in a scale of marks, A, B, C, D; D being failure. But such rules, however impartially followed, do not remedy all the defects of admission to college on certificate.

At first glance, the method of admission on certificate seems to be in harmony with our ideal aims, and therefore satisfactory. It seems to permit and encourage freedom, spontaneity, and interest, and to give the school its true function, that of education rather than of mere instruction, the development of mental power, moral character, and elevated tastes rather than the imparting of fixed quantities of knowledge; and, under more ideal conditions, such would be really the fact. But, in practice, this is often far from the truth. Not infrequently certified candidates for college, who are not well prepared, are admitted; and, although theoretically all students admitted on certificate are on probation for a period after entrance, we hear of few who are dropped from the roll for inadequate preparatory work. Human nature

being what it is, teachers and pupils in general (there are exceptions) really need a stimulus from external sources to overcome sluggishness and self-satisfaction, to say nothing of the loss through the certificate system of the enrichment and strengthening of both methods of teaching and courses of study that might result from a wise examination system in which a good college could exert a more direct and more effective influence on the schools. On the relation of the teachers of a school to the question at issue, the head-master of a well-known academy wrote me as follows :

The preparatory schools cannot do without the drastic stimulus of an entrance examination to college. Masters are lazy—some lazier than others, but lazy. The colleges may talk until Time grows gray, but they (the masters) will not act with vigor unless they see the grim necessity right before them of working daily six days each week, to enable boys to enter college with credit. Given the college and anxious parents to apply the spur, and most masters will “come to time.”

As in Christian ethics we have for a considerable time placed more emphasis on the hedonistic than upon the Stoical element, upon the desire to be happy than upon the power to endure hardness, so, in education, we have been laying more stress upon the pleasurable conditions affecting the pupil than upon his training to fight the battles and meet the crises of life. This statement marks my transition from the consideration of the certificate system to the consideration of the examination system of admission to college. There are those who affirm that it is much easier to impart knowledge and inspire intellectual enthusiasm (perhaps they mean “to try to do these things”) than to test the pupil to determine whether he has received it. Although I do not grant this to be true, yet I concede that all judgments of others are intrinsically difficult. To determine mental power as well as the possession of knowledge is no easy matter. Indeed, when one considers that justice here is supremely important, he must admit the grave responsibility of passing judgment on anyone, including his pupils. Merit, ability, effort, moral worth, are sometimes elusive qualities; and it must be freely admitted that examinations of any sort do not always discover their presence or absence. But, with slight modifications hereinafter to be mentioned, I can but think the college-admission examinations are the best known method of reaching, if not a satisfactory conclusion, then at least the best “working hypothesis” regarding the fitness of the candidate for entrance.

On the question of the action of college-admission examinations upon the candidates for college, let me quote again from the letter from which I have already read an extract :

I fail to understand why a boy, properly fitted, dreads a college-entrance examination, unless he belongs to that small class of nervous boys who should be exempt from such a strain. On the other hand, a boy should learn to welcome the examination test just as he welcomes a match game of football, after weeks of football practice. Previously, he has had hundreds of written tests, scores in each subject, presumably given by clever teachers. Why should one more daunt him? In my

experience, boys who belong in college care little for entrance examinations. They expect to pass them; they do pass them. As for the weaklings who can't pass them because of alleged nervousness, they do not belong in college. They should turn their attention to business, or go to work and fit themselves for college. The idea that a boy cannot tell what he knows is arrant nonsense.

In passing, it is interesting to compare the apparently conflicting opinions on the subject of two college instructors. Professor J. M. Coulter, of the University of Chicago, says:

To compel schools to differentiate early a small and select and expensive class for entrance to the universities is unfair both to the school and to the university, and seriously checks the diffusion of higher education. To deny the privilege of breathing the university atmosphere to any product of a good secondary school involves such a narrow conception of education that one dislikes to associate it with the university. It has always seemed an anomaly that universities are inclined rather to rate themselves upon the basis of their raw material than their finished product. A fine-meshed screen is set up at the beginning of the university career, when it would seem far more logical to set it up at the other end.

Professor W. M. Warren, of Boston University, writes:

None of us wish the truth to be sealed away from any searcher, no matter how humble or how unintelligent; but it seems to me better on the whole that there should be places where minds of superior endowment should have a chance to come at the truth and to gain skill in finding it without hindrance from those who are relatively incompetent. The conception of a college as a public fountain, where an impersonal truth flows for all without respect to present condition of servitude, and where each is welcome to partake in the measure of his particular capacity, no matter how limited, appeals to the democratic spirit in us; but it overlooks the fact that deep drinking is no easy matter when the spring is roiled with a press of pint cups. The college is not the only place where truth can be learned and the intellectual habit acquired; for my part, I should gladly see it kept for the capable.

I have said that these two opinions were only apparently conflicting; for, surely, Professor Coulter could not have intended to advocate the admission to college of poorly prepared, imperfectly trained, or mentally inferior students. He was doubtless speaking of the narrow, traditional list of entrance subjects which effectually debar able students from some colleges. Probably he would approve the sound views of Professor Warren.

II. RESULTS OF LETTERS OF INQUIRY

With the approval of the other members of my committee, I sent out a list of questions to the headmasters of thirty-six secondary schools, selected as typical of the whole class of preparatory schools. In this selection, care was taken that the answers should come from gentlemen whose wisdom and experience qualified them to express opinions entitled to careful consideration. Sufficient funds for a wider investigation were not placed at our disposal, nor did we deem such necessary. Another list I sent to the chairmen of the committees on admission of seventeen colleges in New England

and the middle states. Of the thirty-six schools addressed, answers were received from all; but of these only twenty-nine were so framed as to be of use. All the colleges addressed responded to at least a part of my questions. As instructors in schools and colleges are closer to the individual student than the heads of these institutions, I deemed it advisable to send the questions to the teachers of a particular school and of a particular college. To the questions and answers I now invite your attention.

RETURNS FROM TWENTY-NINE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Admission to college by *examination* or by *certificate*—which? (Please answer, if possible, in the space below each question.)

1. What have you observed among your pupils preparing for college by *examination*, as compared with your candidates for admission by *certificate* in the following particulars?
 - a) Do the former apply themselves more faithfully and continuously from day to day and from month to month than the latter?

Yes, 14. No, 7. Doubtful, 2. No answer, 6.

Or do the former "cram" for some weeks prior to their prospective examination, while doing little continuous work at other times?

Yes, 7. No, 12. Doubtful, 4. No answer, 6.
 - b) How do your *examination* candidates compare with your *certificate* candidates as regards mental ability and physical health and strength?

Examination better, 8. Certificate better, 1. No difference, 12. No answer, 8.
 - c) Do you feel free to *educate* the latter, while only instructing the former group?

Yes, 9. No, 5. Educate both, 10. No answer, 5.
2. a) Do college-admission examinations tend to enrich and strengthen the curricula of secondary schools?

Yes, 11. No, 9. Doubtful, 3. No answer, 6.

Ditto for admission by certificate?

Yes, 4. No, 8. Doubtful, 4. No answer, 13.

- b) Do they tend to secure more scholarly and more thorough and skillful teachers?

Yes, 15. No, 6. Doubtful, 1. No answer, 7.

Ditto for admission by certificate?

Yes, 4. No, 5. Doubtful, 11. No answer, 9.

- c) Do they tend to raise the standard of scholarship and the desire for knowledge among your pupils?

Yes, 13. No, 4. Doubtful, 2. No answer, 10.

Ditto for admission by certificate?

Yes, 3. No, 3. Doubtful, 12. No answer, 11.

- d) Do they tend to enkindle laudable ambition among your pupils for the higher education and for more liberal culture?

Yes, 9. No, 6. Doubtful, 4. No answer, 10.

Ditto for admission by certificate?

Yes, 6. No, 2. Doubtful, 10. No answer, 11.
- 3. By which method do you think that the colleges obtain the best intellectual and moral product from the schools as members of their especial freshman classes?

By examination, 17. By certificate, 5. Doubtful, 3. No answer, 4.

4. Do you think it in general wise for the colleges to vest with the headmaster and his assistants the responsibility for determining the fitness of pupils to enter college?

Yes, 13. No, 13. Doubtful, 1. No answer, 2.

5. Do you regard the influence of college-admission examination as, on the whole, beneficial or pernicious?

Beneficial, 20. Pernicious, 6. Doubtful, 2. No answer, 1.

6. All things considered, which method of admission to college would you vote to retain, and which to abolish, if the matter were left to the suffrages of school-masters?

Retain examination, 19. Retain certificate, 7. Retain both, 3.

COLLEGE PREPARATORY TEACHERS OF A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Admission to college by *examination* or by *certificate* — which? (Please answer, if possible, in the space below each question).

1. What have you observed among your pupils preparing for college by *examination* as compared with your candidates for admission by *certificate* in the following particulars?

- a) Do the former apply themselves more faithfully and continuously from day to day and from month to month than the latter?

Yes, none. No, 4. No difference, 3.

Or do the former "cram" for some weeks prior to their prospective examinations, while doing little continuous work at other times?

Yes, 3. No, 2. No difference, 1. No answer, 1.

- b) How do your *examination* candidates compare with your *certificate* candidates as regards mental ability and physical health and strength?

Examination better, 1. Certificate better, none. No difference, 2. No answer, 4.

- c) Do you feel free to *educate* the latter, while only instructing the former group?

Yes, 4. No, 1. No difference, 1. No answer, 1.

2. a) Do college admission examinations tend to enrich and strengthen the curricula of secondary schools?

Yes, 3. No, 3. No difference, 1.

Ditto for admission by certificate?

Yes, 3. No, 3. No difference, 1.

- b) Do they tend to secure more scholarly and more thorough and skillful teachers?

Yes, 3. No, 3. No answer, 1.

Ditto for admission by certificate?

Yes, 3. No, 2. No answer, 2.

- c) Do they tend to raise the standard of scholarship and the desire for knowledge among your pupils?

Yes, 3. No, 4.

Ditto for admission by certificate?

Yes, 3. No, 2. No answer, 2.

- d) Do they tend to enkindle laudable ambition among your pupils for the higher education and for more liberal culture?

Yes, none. No, 4. No answer, 3.

Ditto for admission by certificate?

Yes, 2. No, 2. No answer, 3.

3. By which method do you think that the colleges obtain the best intellectual and moral product from the schools as members of their respective freshmen classes?
Examination, 2. Certificate, 3. Both methods, 1. No answer, 1.
4. Do you think it in general wise for the colleges to vest with the headmaster and his assistants the responsibility for determining the fitness of pupils to enter college?
Yes, 4. No, 3.
5. Do you regard the influence of college-admission examination as, on the whole, beneficial or pernicious?
Beneficial, 2. Pernicious, 2. Doubtful, 2. No answer, 1.
6. All things considered, which method of admission to college would you vote to retain, and which to abolish, if the matter were left to the suffrages of schoolmasters?
Abolish certificate, 2. Abolish examinations, 2. Abolish neither, 3.

RETURNS FROM SEVENTEEN COLLEGES

Admission to college by *examination* or by *certificate*—which? (Please answer, if possible, in the space below each question.)

1. As students after entrance, how do those admitted by *examination* compare with those admitted by *certificate* in the following particulars:
 - a) In scholarship?
Examination better, 2.¹ Certificate better, 6. No difference, 3. No answer, 9.
 - b) In general mental ability?
Examination better, 1. Certificate better, 5. No difference, 4. No answer, 7.
 - c) In moral character and application to their studies and the general performance of college duties?
Examination better, 1. Certificate better, 3. No difference, 6. No answer, 7.
2. By which of the two methods do you think that you obtain the best product, from year to year, as members of your freshmen classes?
By examination, 3. By certificate, 6. No difference, 3. No answer, 5.
3. Do you favor the abolition of either method of admission to college? If so, why?
Abolish examinations, none. Abolish certificate, 5. Abolish neither, 12.

RETURNS FROM CERTAIN PROFESSORS IN ONE COLLEGE

Admission to college by *examination* or by *certificate*—which? (Please answer, if possible, in the space below each question.)

1. As students after entrance, how do those admitted by *examination* compare with those admitted by *certificate* in the following particulars:
 - a) In scholarship?
Better by examination, 2. Better on certificate, none. Certificate satisfactory, 2.
 - b) In general mental ability?
 - c) In moral character and application to their studies and the general performance of college duties?

¹ U. of P. admits candidates for admission from public schools upon satisfactory record of scholarship and work done, but examines all applicants from private schools.

2. By which of the two methods do you think that you obtain the best product, from year to year, as members of your freshmen classes ?

By examination, 2. By certificate, none. No difference, 2.

3. Do you favor the abolition of either method of admission to college ? If so, which, and why ?

Abolish examinations, none. Abolish certificates, 1. Retain both, 3.

In general these questions did not bring out very definite or very useful information, for this reason : When a college admits on certificate, all but the very poorest pupils in the schools from which certificates are accepted will present the certificate. There remain to be examined, therefore, the refuse of those schools and the young men who have presumably been trained at poorer schools, consequently, at every college which admits on certificate, a large majority of the men who excel in scholarship, general mental ability, moral character, and application to their studies, have come in on certificate. In other words, such colleges do not possess sufficient and proper data to make a just comparison between the two methods of admission. The chairmen of the committees on admission of the best colleges accepting certificates have, however, written me frankly—though speaking for themselves, but not without support from several of their colleges—that they would give up the certificate system provided other colleges would agree to do the same.

III. CONFERENCE WITH THE NEW ENGLAND COLLEGE COMMISSION

The Commission of Colleges in New England on Admission Examinations courteously gave your committee a hearing at its annual meeting at Boston University, April 28, 1900. As the proceedings of that meeting are now printed, and obtainable from the secretary, Professor W. C. Poland, of Brown University, I will not detain you to give you a report of it. It should be said, however, that after the commission had listened to our remarks and recommendations, they confined their deliberations, not to the abolition of the certificate system, but to various methods of better administering it. It does not appear that the commission, as a whole, favors examinations as the exclusive method of admission to college.

IV. OBJECTIONS TO THE CERTIFICATE SYSTEM

It is doubtless already clear to you that I do not favor the certificate system as at present used ; and, in this opinion, I represent the other members of your committee. The objections to the system were so admirably stated by President Eliot, in his answer to the letter of inquiry, that I quote them :

1. The certificate method diminishes the influence of colleges on secondary schools; and, particularly, it deprives colleges of the means of influencing the programs of study and the methods of teaching in the secondary schools. That influence has been in the past a valuable one.

2. It deprives the public of the best means of learning the comparative merits or value of different secondary schools.

3. It deprives a good secondary school of the best existing means of demonstrating that it is good, or that it is better than its neighbors.

4. It subjects the headmasters of some public and private schools to a strain which the colleges or the community has no right to put upon them; since the headmasters of some schools are almost forced to give certificates to pupils whom they know not to deserve them. From this point of view, the method seems to me very enfeebling as to both discipline and scholarship.

To the above I add another:

5. The colleges ought not to vest in the headmaster or his assistants the power to determine who shall enter their freshman classes, but should retain it in their own hands.

No grammar-school principal or teachers should be given the power to say who should enter a high school. The principal of a high school and his assistants should determine the fitness of all applicants for admission; but, in such determination, they should of course take into consideration the prior school history of each candidate; and such a history should be furnished by the principals of the grammar schools. Precisely so do I conceive the relations of the preparatory schools and the colleges.

Whether justly or unjustly, some of the colleges admitting students on certificate have incurred the criticism of seeking mere numbers, of emphasizing quantity more than quality, of "worshiping the golden calf." In so far as such an idea has gained lodgment in the public mind, the cause of the higher education in general, and the reputation of those colleges in particular, have suffered. As every true friend of culture is jealous for the leadership of the colleges in education, science, literature, and the liberal arts, such degradation in public esteem is a matter for sincere regret. While the examination method may be so loosely used as to lead to the same result, certainly it gives the colleges far greater control over their own standards than does the certificate method of admission; for, although in theory those admitted on certificate are on probation for one term and their school is on probation all the time, few candidates are ever remanded or their schools condemned.

V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the analogy may not in all respects hold, I think that we may—in the consideration of this subject—learn a lesson from the experience of the professions of law and medicine. I have been told by members of state boards of bar and medical examiners that the vastly higher standards of preparation and the far more efficient practice of these professions are due very largely to the increasingly rigid examinations now established by law for all applicants for admission to practice, which displaced the old system of certificates from preceptors. It must be said, however, and said with emphasis, that the superiority of the examination over the certificate method of admission to college depends upon the wisdom with which it is administered. Narrow prescriptions of certain text-books (as at Wellesley College) and a certain number of pages of texts, as at several colleges, are

pernicious in their influence on the schools. Likewise are all admission examinations that test scarcely more than memory in preparation of assigned work. College-admission examinations should test powers of thought and demand its accurate expression. They should offer optionals and encourage extra or additional liberalizing reading and study; thus they will strengthen the school curricula and infuse enthusiasm for learning and desire for culture and the scholarly spirit among pupils. When the graduates of other colleges who are here present have written me so strongly in praise of the character and influence of the Harvard admission examinations, I know that you will permit a Harvard man to say that in his judgment they have in the past twenty-five years greatly advanced the cause of secondary education in the United States. This they have done because of the amount of conscientious and intelligent thought that has been put into them, and the ability and impartiality with which Harvard has in general administered the system. She has greatly increased their influence for good of late by offering examinations in a wider range of subjects and by the issue of descriptive pamphlets in each department, relating to the topics to be studied and the methods of presentation by the teacher.

I am not, however, satisfied with the examination as carried out even by Harvard. To it I would add a sort of certificate — not to take the place of, but to be combined with, the method of admission by examination; to be combined with it not by any fixed rule — certainly no rule of the schools — but at the discretion of the college in every individual case. Such a certificate should be required for every candidate and should state, over the headmaster's signature, the pupil's work every year in each branch, and the mark he obtained at the end of the year, with the name of the teacher who gave him the mark. It should also state whether or not he is a graduate of the school, and should be accompanied by, or should contain, an account of the candidate himself in relation, not to scholarship, but to health, character, and general tendencies. Such a certificate should prove highly useful to college authorities in the settlement of doubtful cases at the examination or in dealing with alleged cases of special nervousness at the examination; and it should be serviceable even in the case of those who have successfully passed the entrance examination. This certificate should state *facts*, and not opinions, such as the headmaster's belief that the candidate is prepared for college; for while he may have very intelligent convictions on this point, the history of the candidate is quite sufficient for all purposes when united with the admission examinations.

In the foregoing report I have, no doubt, presented matter that has often before been threshed out by the older members of this association; yet I deem it worth while to have brought it before you if for no other purpose than as a protest against the present system of admission to college on certificate.

DISCUSSION

THE PRESIDENT : Is it the pleasure of the meeting to consider the report which has now been read to you ? It relates, as the chairman of the committee said, to a subject which is certainly debatable. The statistics given us in the course of this report show how greatly opinion is, on the one hand, divided, and on the other, indeterminate. This is a meeting of men and women who have large experience with this question. Is it the desire of the meeting to devote some moderate time to a discussion of this report ? We are punctual with our business and can afford, at the pleasure of the meeting, to devote say half an hour to a further discussion of this subject.

DR. WILLIAM F. BRADBURY, of the Cambridge Latin School : Mr. President— Just one thing simply. Many things might be said. I can say that I agree most thoroughly with almost everything that has been said. There is just one little point that I wish to speak of, where it seems to me the certificate system would have failed to do justice. It is something that happened this summer. I had a class in college algebra. There was a young lady in it taking a post-graduate course in the Latin school, who did splendid work in college algebra. Nothing could be better than the work she did. I had a boy, too, who did wretched work in it ; he did not seem to know anything about it. Both of them had written very many algebra examination papers in the school. The boy had received very often zero on his paper ; I think the highest was 50 per cent., but it was usually 20 or less. The young lady had received from 90 to 100 every time. Before going to the examination I said to the young man, "You don't want to try this paper at Harvard. You will surely fail. Just as well give it up now. It is of no use for you to try it." When the report came from the college the girl had received "C" and the boy "B," and so an honor. Well, it astonished me. I thought there must be some mistake. I wrote to Radcliffe and to Harvard, saying there must be some mistake in each of these cases. I received word back that the papers had been looked over again in the case of both and the report was correct, but both wrote to me that I could see the papers. I took occasion to look carefully over the paper of the young man. I have not yet seen the paper at Radcliffe, but I am going to. I went up to the college, and the young man's papers were handed to me. I copied the paper very

carefully and carried it home. I have it exactly as the boy wrote it. I was gratified to find that the paper had been very carefully looked over by the board. Almost every question was marked three times. A mark had been given and then had been scratched out with a blue pencil, another mark, a different one, given and then scratched out, and a third mark which was left, showing that either three different persons had looked the questions over or one had looked them over a second and a third time very carefully and changed his mind. The sum total, too, had been added, added again, and added again, and the final mark left. I should not have certified that boy in college algebra. I felt sure he could not pass; but I think the mark on the paper was exactly right. Here was an example where a boy had done something on examination and had done nothing before. I can account for it quite easily; that he had worked up to the last, gradually growing up to it. I had been over every paper with him very carefully and shown him where his trouble was, and at last he went and got an honor, and the college marked him right (applause).

PROFESSOR W. C. POLAND, of Brown University: Mr. President—As having a connection with the commission, and as a member of the committee appointed by the commission to investigate the question of the best method of administration of the certificate system, I feel greatly interested in this discussion. There may be some need of clearing our ideas as to what is the basis of the certificate for admission. It is possible that there is not an entire clarity of view as to what is the underlying theory, or what ought to be the underlying theory, of a certificate presented by a pupil for admission to college, on which certificate, practically, the pupil is to be admitted in lieu of an examination. Really there are two theories that seem to emerge in the consideration of this question. It is generally assumed, I think, that the teacher is the final arbiter as to the fitness of the pupil for admission to college in all cases where a certificate is presented; but there is room for a question whether that is inevitably the case. I think that in all discussions that I have ever heard—I have heard a number on the subject and I myself have participated in some—it is generally assumed that that is the theory that underlies the certificate. In considering the administration of the certificate question we ought to answer clearly some such question as this: “What is the proper basis of a certificate for admission to college? Is it in the theory that the preparatory teacher is the person best qualified to decide as to the fitness of

a pupil to undertake the work of the freshman year; or is it in the theory that an approved teacher or an approved school testifies that the pupil has performed a certain amount of work in each of the several studies required for admission, while the college reserves to itself the function of judgment upon this evidence as the fitness of the pupil to undertake the work aforesaid?" Or it may be put more briefly in some such form as this: "What is the proper function of an entrance certificate given by a preparatory teacher to a candidate for admission to college? Is it to admit a candidate on the judgment of the preparatory teacher? Or is it to present testimony as to the work performed by the candidate, on which testimony the examining board of the college shall judge whether the candidate should be admitted?" Of course, the certificate meant by this question is the certificate which takes the place of all other examination by college authorities. The examination is not then an examination of the candidate, but an examination of the evidence which the candidate presents. It seems to me that a fair question is open here, and that the solution of the question of administration will be vastly helped by answering this preliminary question.

That is all, Mr. President, that I wish to do, merely to present this question as a question which has appeared on several occasions. I think it has appeared in the report of Mr. Ramsay this morning to some degree, and it has appeared elsewhere in private discussions of the matter.

PROFESSOR JOHN K. LORD, of Dartmouth College: Mr. President—You have very happily said that this is a debatable question, and any of us who have given it any consideration have found it so in our own judgment. The field of debate is so wide, and the opinions are so various, that it will certainly be worthless to attempt to make a review of the field in such a brief time as we have. It will take, indeed, a man who could "distinguish and divide a hair 'twixt south and south-west side," to tell what the statistics which were presented to us this morning meant to the minds of the teachers. My own observation and correspondence and experience have led me to feel that there is a very marked disagreement among college teachers and among secondary-school teachers as to the benefits of one system and the other. I therefore wish to offer simply one or two considerations this morning, as they have occurred to me in reference to the two systems.

Of course, a certificate system, with which I am reasonably familiar, has two points of consideration : One is its theory, and the other is its administration. In reference to the theory of the certificate system, we have had it compared with the examination system. I want to dissent from the theory that the examination for entrance to college is an educational test any further than that any event which calls upon us to test our power in this world is an educational test. Nothing that helps to draw us out is other than an educational process. But I disagree with the view that the examination at entrance to college, set by a body of men that have had nothing to do with a previous course of training, is an educational test. Last night President Eliot—if he will allow me to refer to him—in giving some analogies to entrance examinations, said that when he received a letter of a thousand words, which he was to answer fully and clearly in a letter of fifty words, that was an educational test. I think the analogy would have been exact, or more nearly exact, if he had gone on to say that he knew, in writing his reply, that his position as president of Harvard University depended on the judgment of the man who wrote the letter of a thousand words, whether his letter of fifty words was a satisfactory answer. I venture to think that a lawyer who argues a case at the bar would regard his case somewhat differently, and more in the light of a college-entrance examination, if he knew that he was going to be disbarred if he lost his case. I think the physician who practices on a patient and performs an operation for appendicitis would feel that his position was more like that of a college student if he was to be debarred from the practice of medicine if his patient died. I think the analogies would be fair in that way. It seems to me that this examination for entrance to college stands out from all other examinations, in the stress it puts upon the test. It is not an educational test, it is a classification test, and the two are just as distinct as two things can possibly be.

I do not want to follow out this, or to say anything further on this subject. There is so much to be said that one could keep talking indefinitely. But I want to call attention to one fact in reference to the correspondence between the examination and the certificate. The certificate system is supposed to be definite and clear in its administration ; that is to say, it brings a student up to college with preparation complete and entire. The colleges do, as a fact, make minor exceptions ; but as a rule a certificate is supposed to enter a man clean into college. He goes in because he has done the work required, either in amount or quality, as the case may be, and he enters without

condition. How is it with the examination system? I venture to say that there are more people, men and girls, conditioned on entering college, who have a year or more or less in which to make up their work, ten times over, than come in deficient under the certificate system. How is it with a man, for instance, who comes to college and has two years in which to make up his conditions, who has a year in which to make up his conditions, who has six months in which to make up his conditions? It does not make any difference what the time is, if a man is conditioned on entering college it means that he is not prepared to enter college, on the whole. If I may put it in a homely phrase, the examination opens a back-door entrance into college, it allows men to come in who are not prepared on the face of it; the examination says they are not prepared, and therefore they have to be conditioned. The result is that they come in. They may take up entirely different work from that in which they have been conditioned, going on with their college work, and showing themselves prepared, according to the standards of the college, to do college work in the college, but they have that long tail of work to bring up behind them. I have sometimes thought in this connection, Mr. President, that the certificate system does an immense benefit to a great many persons of moderate ability, and yet who ought to have college education, from the very fact that it allows them to enter college without conditions. I think that a condition is a millstone around every person's neck that enters college with it. If I had my way, there should not anybody come in conditioned. I think—I won't say absolutely, but almost—I think that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred a condition is a hindrance and not a help. If a boy or girl is really competent to do the college work, he or she is competent to do it because of what he or she has got then and there, not because of what he or she is going to get in the next year, or the next six months, or whatever the time may be. I think, therefore, that the certificate system oftentimes is an actual benefit in that fact, that it does allow people to go into college without a condition, when perhaps they would be conditioned if they took an examination.

I throw out these two points merely, Mr. President. There are multitudes of things which doubtless come to us all in the matter, but others will wish, perhaps, to speak.

THE PRESIDENT: The President will point out some of the difficulties which embarrass the way of one who wishes to study

this subject. In the first place, in New England we have no system of really examining the condition of the secondary schools; therefore, the experiment of certificates is tried under the most disadvantageous possible circumstances. When it was first introduced into this country, an argument was made in favor of it from the German practice, secondary schools in Germany giving an outgoing certificate valid at the university. A fatal defect in the argument was that the German secondary schools are supervised by competent government educational authorities; ours by none. In New England we have nothing more than an occasional friendly visit to some schools by some college officer. That is an extremely weak and imperfect method, though perhaps better than nothing. We are, therefore, trying the certificate system under the worst possible conditions. The public, or a student of this subject like myself, cannot get the facts which are necessary to an understanding of the working of either the certificate or the examination method. At Harvard we publish every year the number of rejections at our examinations, the percentage of rejections, the number of rejections in every subject in which we examine, and the percentage of rejection in every subject in which we examine. I know no other institution in this country which does this. Yet this publicity is necessary to secure for a student of the subject the results of the experience of large numbers of institutions. Without publicity we cannot get evidence of the working of these two systems. Again, as soon as a New England college puts the certificate system at work freely, it ceases to have any useful observation of the examination method; and consequently its officers gradually fall into the state of mind of Professor Lord, who thinks it a merit of the certificate system that it admits people clear, invariably. We could easily accomplish that without having either examination or certificate. Moreover, as Mr. Ramsay has already pointed out, in a college which really works on the certificate plan, none but the refuse students are admitted on examination. Of course, all comparison in such colleges between the men or women admitted on certificates and those admitted on examination is absolutely useless, as has

already been pointed out here and as has been pointed out in former discussions. There is not the slightest use of asking in a college which really works on the certificate plan which students turn out best, the certificated or the examined. Of course it is the certificated. I mention these things to show the difficulties under which a real student of this subject labors in New England, or in the United States at large.

Moreover, the certificate system in New England is not tried under conditions which an advocate of an examination system would think fair. Why not? Because the certificate system in New England is tried in presence of the examinations maintained by Harvard, Yale, and Bowdoin; and the certificate system, working in the presence of those examinations, is, I venture to think, a totally different thing from what a universal certificate system would prove to be. The strict examinations maintained by those colleges in New England which still use the examination methods solely, greatly affect the results of the certificate system. As I heard President Carter, of Williams, say years ago, "We like our certificate system well enough, but we don't know what on earth would happen to it if Harvard and Yale should adopt the certificate system." I think, therefore, that a real student of this problem labors in New England, or even in the United States, under very serious difficulties, which not even the excellent report to which we have just listened can remove. I hope there are ladies or gentlemen here present who can point out how the field of this inquiry can be better cultivated.

THE FEDERATION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

PROFESSOR WILLIAM MACDONALD,
Bowdoin College

I am aware, Mr. President, that it is seldom well to begin one's remarks with an apology or a disclaimer. I think I ought to say, however, that the title assigned to my paper is somewhat more ambitious than the substance of the paper warrants. I did meditate a very ambitious paper indeed, but it seemed, on the whole, better to devote the main part of the paper to a particular phase of the subject which seemed to me of special interest